



PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Kankakee United is to reduce gun violence involving African-American boys and men under 25 years of age in Kankakee by uniting community resources to increase neighborhood engagement, address trauma related concerns, and remove employment barriers.

VISION STATEMENT

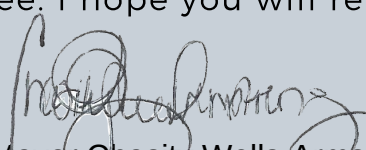
The City of Kankakee is an engaged community with abundant opportunities for residents to lead safe, healthy, and productive lives.

HISTORY/GENESIS

Becoming mayor in my hometown was not only exciting, but I knew would be filled with many challenges. Over many years, I have witnessed the decline of neighborhoods in the City and the disproportionate economic impact on African-Americans as related to poverty, crime, trauma and the negative outcomes associated with such factors.

While attending a National League of Cities conference during March 2018, I was contacted by the Interim Police Chief and advised there had been a double homicide in the City; two victims of gun violence. Needless to say, I was upset; concerned for the community and the impacted families. Public safety is one of my most important responsibilities and I had to figure out a way to improve safety in our city. During a session the next day, when I shared with my fellow mayors what had happened, our instructor informed me about the national Cities United initiative and assured me of resources to help address the issue of gun violence.

I contacted Cities United, which was formed during 2011 by New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter. Cities United has become a coalition of nearly 100 mayors from across the country working to reduce gun violence among African-American males ages 16-24 years by 50% by year 2025. I advocated for the City of Kankakee to be accepted into a Roadmap Academy offered by Cities United and out of the week-long training they provided, Kankakee United was formed to address gun violence in the City of Kankakee and implement a citywide public safety plan. This plan reflects our initial efforts to move forward to reduce gun violence in the City of Kankakee. I hope you will read it and choose to become involved in the action plans.



Mayor Chasity Wells-Armstrong

YOUTH IMPACTED BY GUN VIOLENCE

Like many other cities in the United States, young African-American men and boys are the overwhelming majority of homicide and gun violence victims in the City of Kankakee. In 2017, 83% of all gun related incidents in the city involved African-American males. Young African-American men and boys, those under 25 years of age, were 70% of the victims. These statistics are in line with data gathered throughout this decade.

The majority of these crimes take place in the First and Second Wards. These areas also have the highest percentage of children vulnerable in one or more developmental areas. Children experiencing vulnerabilities in one or more areas are more likely to face greater challenges in school and later life success. The relationships between school success, employment, and public safety have been clearly demonstrated (Justice Policy Institute, 2012). Additionally, the trauma experienced by the children living with violence around them will have lifetime physical and behavioral health effects if not addressed (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

LISTENING SESSION FINDINGS

Approximately three dozen neighborhood listening sessions and meetings with community leaders were held involving over 250 youths and adults. These took place between July 2018 and March 2019 to gather information and ideas about what could be done to reduce violence, especially gun violence, in the City of Kankakee among young African-American men and boys. Information was also collected about what is already being done in the community that could help this situation. Additionally, data were collected from Kankakee School District 111, Kankakee Workforce Services, Kankakee Police Department, Kankakee County Juvenile Probation Office, Kankakee County Sheriff's Department, and area service providers. A group of Olivet Nazarene University (ONU) senior social work majors completed a community needs assessment of Kankakee during the 2018 Fall semester. They utilized the information gained through the listening sessions, meetings, and from local data sources. They also conducted additional interviews and gathered data from additional sources.

Several strong themes emerged from the conversations and needs assessment. One of the most critical themes is that city residents are not aware of the many educational and employment opportunities available. Furthermore, youth want more information about how they can participate in the "gig" economy and start their own businesses. Several young participants and law enforcement officers said the violence mainly comes from the desire to make fast money selling illegal substances that then results in fights over deals gone bad.

Another frequently expressed theme was the desire to get to know one's neighbors better. There was a sense of neighborhood pride among residents, even where high levels of crime are occurring. Several people spoke about the desire to build relationships between neighbors to create a safety net where they could look out for each other. They want to let those involved in criminal activities know that they were being watched and are not wanted in the neighborhood.

Suggestions were also made about the need to address the increasing anger many youths are demonstrating in school and in the neighborhoods. Several evidence-based practices were suggested by the ONU social workers to address the underlying conditions which frequently lead young men and boys to become involved in violent and criminal behavior. Often-cited causes are the absence of close positive relationships with their fathers and other traumatic experiences in their lives.

In response to these findings, Kankakee United has identified three priorities: 1. Increase neighborhood engagement, 2. Address trauma related concerns, particularly those most likely impacting young African-American men and boys, and 3. Assist in removing employment barriers frequently faced by young African-American men and boys.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTION PLANS



GOAL: To increase public safety for all City of Kankakee residents.

OBJECTIVE: To improve outcomes for young African-American men and boys in Kankakee through neighborhood engagement.

ACTIONS:

- 1) Provide Kankakee residents with suggestions for organizing block parties, youth activities, and other social events to get to know their neighbors.
- 2) Encourage neighborhood groups to identify what they love about where they live and to create ways to express their neighborhood pride.
- 3) Encourage adult residents to volunteer to serve as mentors and assist with youth programs.



GOAL: To decrease the number of African-American boys and men under 25 years of age in custody and re-offending

OBJECTIVE: To prevent and address childhood trauma related to violence through healthy relationships and behavioral development.

ACTIONS:

- 1) Initiate a "Forgiveness" campaign in partnership with area faith communities and youth service providers to lead youth through a process to forgive someone in their lives who is at the root of their anger.
- 2) Partner with Project SUN to strengthen and unify efforts to help children, adolescents, and their families access mental health services.



GOAL: To foster greater school success and expanded employment opportunities for young African-American men and boys in Kankakee.

OBJECTIVE: To make clear pathways to equitable educational outcomes and sustainable employment more accessible.

ACTIONS:

- 1) Continue to provide African American Civic Leaders Scholarships to youth.
- 2) Promote Kankakee School District's programs and recognize student accomplishments via the City's communication outlets.
- 3) Partner with workforce development organizations, such as Kankakee Workforce Services and Samaschool, to provide training and opportunities for young adults to engage in the "Gig Economy."
- 4) Encourage area employers to provide internships and after-school/seasonal employment to city high school students.
- 5) Promote teen and adult participation in JUMP, the Juvenile Mentoring Program for Kankakee County youth formed in partnership by Kankakee Area YMCA, Kankakee County Chamber of Commerce, and the Kankakee County State's Attorney's Office.
- 6) Partner with the Kankakee County State's Attorney to offer expungement opportunities for young adults.

Mayor

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**GET
INVOLVED!**

**Contact a
Kankakee United
Team Member**